

# **The Shift from Acceptance to Prevention: Hazing Behaviors in the U.S. Military**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**BLUF:** This report provides a summary of Service Members' (SMs) identification of hazing behaviors. Data were collected from a survey administered during various human relations specialists training courses at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI). Overall findings revealed that one-third of SMs were unable to correctly identify incidents of hazing despite being provided their Service's definition of hazing and a study guide explaining the types and demands of hazing. These results provide areas of improvement, which can guide future training and education efforts on hazing both at DEOMI as well as in the Field, Fleet, and Wing.

**Methods:** A total of 152 students participated in this survey across three human relations specialists training courses. The survey consisted of the following: All students were told to write their own definitions of hazing before receiving any introduction to hazing material. Following their definition, students were able to review their Services' hazing policy and definition of hazing. Students were also provided with a one-page study guide explaining the three types of hazing (e.g., subtle, harassment, violent) and the three types of demands (e.g., cognitive, physical, behavioral). Students were then presented with four real-life scenarios, three of which consisted of hazing behaviors and one of which consisted of neutral behaviors. Students were asked seven multiple-choice follow-up questions in addition to completing basic demographic information. The survey was accessible online via SurveyMonkey; however, if students were unable to complete the online survey, they had the option to complete a paper and pencil survey.

**Results:** The majority of students (65%) were able to correctly identify all of the scenarios presented to them as either hazing or neutral. Demographic characteristics of the samples (e.g., age, sex, race, or active duty status) did not influence survey findings. Graphical representations of all results can be found in the results section of this report.

**Conclusion:** These data suggest there is a gap in knowledge and training regarding the identification of hazing events, and that even when provided with definitions and examples, 35% still could not correctly identify hazing behaviors. As a result, more training and education needs to be provided to SMs to identify hazing behaviors.

## Introduction

Hazing is an example of “casual violence” behaviors that are disguised as accepted and appropriate traditions or rites of passage within our society (Nuwer, 2004). The military is rich in traditions, many of which are benign, which highlight significant transitions, status changes, and group membership (Keller et al., 2015). Traditions such as these can enhance group cohesion, pride, and commitment. Some traditions, however, may present themselves as a form of abuse for potential new members to endure as a sign of commitment to the group (Keller et al., 2015). This may especially be the case in communities where the exclusivity of their community or group is valued even over the core values of their Service. Through the silence and acceptance of these activities, hazing has permeated through many societies of life including Greek life, athletic life, and military life. Although these behaviors have been endorsed as acceptable for years without question, this is no longer the case. Hazing behaviors are a crime in 43 states (Nuwer, 2004, p. 30). Universities have taken to anti-hazing policies and anti-hazing pledges for Greek houses. The military has also instituted hazing as a chargeable offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) with hazing behaviors specifically falling under Articles 80, 81, 92, 93, 124, 128, 133, and 134.

One of the primary issues in recognizing hazing behaviors is differentiating them from bullying behaviors. Both behaviors involve either psychological or physical harm, they can cause individuals to feel isolated, they can vary in severity, and they can be performed either covertly or overtly (Svec, 2014). However, the ultimate goals of bullying or hazing are quite different and distinct. Bullying behaviors are meant to *exclude* the victim, and generally, there is no point in which the bullying behaviors end; in simpler terms, bullying is a gross misuse of power (Svec, 2014). Hazing, on the other hand, is where the victim is included by the group of hazers and the

victim participates in silly, but abusive, activities as a requirement for *acceptance* into the group (Nuwer, 2004, p. 200). Bullying is meant to make the victim feel alone in the social group whereas hazing is meant to make the victim feel like a member of a prestigious club.

An interesting difference to note is how bullying and hazing are perceived by the general population. Taken from general observations of society, news, and personal communications, bullying is cast as a dark, intimidating, oppressive, and violent behavior whereas hazing is thought of in a lighter, more welcoming “kids will be kids” type of behavior. This “friendlier” view of hazing is a disguise created by those labeling such behaviors as traditions or rites of passage. Hazing is just as dark, oppressive, and violent as bullying, if not worse. Both bullying and hazing behaviors are dangerous, abusive, and need to be stopped.

Why does hazing continue to permeate our military ranks and why do such behaviors seem to be condoned? Nuwer (2004) posed these questions and found the number one reason pointed to peoples’ free choice. People made the choice to choose which group they wanted to join; people made the choice to participate in those hazing behaviors (Nuwer, 2004, p. xxi; Kimmel, 2009, p. 115). However, in a military setting, the perception is that there is not much choice.

### **What are the Costs of Hazing?**

How much is a person worth? How much is their psychological well-being worth? How much is their life worth? These are questions hazers do not think about; they do not consider the consequences when they begin to engage in these types of behaviors. Hazing is dangerous; it can involve sodomy, sexual assault, and physical abuse (Nuwer, 2004, p. 171) and it manifests itself through cognitive, physical, and behavioral demands (Svec, 2014).

Financially, SMs engaging in hazing cost the military a large amount of money. Handy (2012) calculated the cost of a real-life hazing incident that occurred at a military academy. He found that \$14,062 worth of productivity had been lost due to SMs' involvement with the hazing activity rather than with their designated duties (Handy, 2012). There is also the cost of investigating the incident and the investigators' time that could be spent elsewhere. Once an incident is reported, there must be a follow up investigation, which can be lengthy and costly. Hazing incidents can also lead to low morale and motivation from SMs, resulting in less productivity and low inspiration to increase productivity. All of these outcomes have a financial cost beyond the actual hazing behaviors. By fostering an environment with low motivation and morale, SMs will not realize why they should try harder or go that extra mile, providing the bare minimum effort which may not be enough.

However, there is a much steeper cost to hazing than just money. SMs' lives are at risk when they encourage and engage in hazing behaviors. Forcing someone to dress up as a woman to become a shellback or pushing a SM's pin into their chest in order to make them bleed as a sign of celebration for their promotion are all harmful behaviors. Injuries such as irreversible intracranial damage, blunt intra-abdominal organ damage, third-degree burns, heat stroke, suffocation, aspiration, and death (Nuwer, 2004, p. 171) are just some of the dangerous physical outcomes of hazing.

Another costly result of hazing is sexual assault (Nuwer, 2004, p. 176; Kimmel, 2009, p. 112). Hazing behaviors are a common practice for men-on-men sexual assault to occur. Nuwer (2004, p. 176) describes such sexual acts, some of which include "...simulating sex, forced to attach objects to their genitalia, have undesirable materials rubbed on their bodies, or be coerced into unwanted close proximity with a naked individual." In extreme cases, pledges are coerced

into having unwanted sexual activity with a group member (Nuwer, 2004, p. 176). These behaviors can be found in both the college environment as well as the military. A recent article by Tilghman (2015) discusses this phenomenon. Men-on-men sexual assault is increasing as an estimated 19,000 military sexual assault cases in 2014 were not stereotypical situations (Tilghman, 2015). This indicates that the assaults did not have the intent to harm the individual but instead to abuse and humiliate the victim (Tilghman, 2015) much like the intent of hazing behaviors. Because hazing behaviors can lead to sexual assault acts, it has now become a more serious issue that includes not only hazing outcomes but also military sexual trauma outcomes.

### **Current Status on Hazing across the Military Services**

Some groups of societies attempt to condemn the “harsher” hazing behaviors but still support “acceptable” hazing behaviors. One such example of “acceptable” hazing behaviors within the military is the Naval ritual of becoming a shellback. According to Hersh (2002), this ritual dates back nearly 400 years ago in the accounts of French sailor journals. Becoming a shellback, also known as the Line Crossing Ceremony, is when a seaman who has not crossed the equator line, at this point known as a Pollywog (Hersh, 2002), is about to embark on said adventure. The transition from Pollywog to Shellback begins a month before the seamen cross the equator. The Pollywogs must dance, sing, and perform skits to their fellow crew, they must eat food much too spicy to actually consume, they must dress themselves in attire mandated by “King Neptune” which can range from wearing their clothes inside out to wearing women’s attire, they could be made to crawl through the leftover breakfast food, they could kiss the “royal baby’s belly” which is often covered in grease, and finally, they could be dowsed in sea water (Moore, 2013). After enduring constant humiliation and demands from their superiors and fellow crew, the seamen become Shellbacks and are accepted by their peers.

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Interestingly, in a recent report published by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2016), a commander of the USS Carl Vinson issued formal guidance on the Line Crossing Ceremony. Guidelines specified "...designated oversight and safety responsibilities, listed permissible and non-permissible activities, and noted that participation was voluntary" (GAO, 2016, p. 15). Examples of specific guidelines included that SMs are able to perform in a talent show, with the exception that there are not sexually suggestive props, costumes, skits, or gags (GAO, 2016, p. 15). Additionally, no one was forced to participate in the activities and the activities were supervised.

An article written by Meghann Myers (2014) identified 24 allegations of hazing in the U.S. Navy spanning from July 2013 to February 2014. In another article by Rick Maze (2012,) he identified 71 hazing allegations in the Army spanning from 2006 to 2012 and another 21 in the U.S. Air Force from 2005 to 2012. These numbers represent the cases that are public, that have been reported and are accessible for viewing. There is always the concern that these numbers are under representative, and that there are a lot more questionable behaviors occurring than anyone is aware of. But by drawing more attention onto these behaviors there is a potential for something to be done, for action to be taken.

In 2013, the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity commissioned a RAND Study to assess the incidence of hazing activities across the Armed Forces. This review included a review of the state of hazing prevention policies and potential recommendations on how to enhance hazing incidence reporting systems and education/prevention programs. The RAND Report (Keller et al., 2015) recommended the following: 1) the 1997 Department of Defense (DoD) hazing definition be rewritten to be more specific; 2) to conduct a needs

assessment at the organizational level and the individual level to assess the scope of hazing/initiation activities; and 3) to create a DoD-wide database to report hazing incidents.

In a more formal and military-specific setting, recent research has been done investigating the topics of hazing and bullying in the U.S. Military. Within DEOMI, Svec (2014) investigated whether SMs could distinguish between hazing and bullying activities. Her study assessed SMs' definitions of hazing and bullying, their experiences and perceptions of hazing, and whether scenarios that were presented constituted hazing activities or bullying activities. Overall, the study found there was no clear demarcation between hazing and bullying activities for SMs. This was reflected in both the definitions and identification of scenarios. In Svec's (2014) study, only 50% of the participants' written definitions could be considered hazing, with another 6% saying that bullying was the same as hazing. When it came to identifying scenarios as hazing or bullying, again, only 50% of participants could correctly do so. This study shows that only half of the SMs were able to distinguish bullying scenarios from hazing scenarios.

Based upon the gap identified by Svec (2014), current research efforts within DEOMI's Hope Research Center designed a hazing study to investigate whether SMs could identify hazing incidents transformed from real-life scenarios. Thus, the current study sought to answer whether SMs could distinguish acts of hazing in general. The types of hazing were also addressed to include subtle, harassment, or violent along with the types of demands inherent in hazing acts (e.g., cognitive, physical, behavioral). Types of hazing were taken from Lundeen's *Hazing: Ritual of Bondage* (2013). Types of demands were used in Svec's (2014) study. See Table 1 for a description of the types of hazing and demands.



*Table 1. Description of types of hazing and types of hazing demands*

<b>Type</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Subtle hazing</b>	These are types of behaviors that are taken for granted or accepted as harmless.
<b>Harassment hazing</b>	These are types of behaviors that cause emotional anguish or physical discomfort in order to feel like part of the group.
<b>Violent hazing</b>	These are types of behaviors that have the potential to cause a combination of physical, emotional, or psychological harm.
<b>Demand Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Cognitive Demands</b>	Requirements to follow any activity that may induce mental stress.
<b>Behavioral Demands</b>	Requirements to perform various acts that may or may not relate to the purpose of the group.
<b>Physical Demands</b>	Requirements to fulfill any physical activity ordered.

In addition, a study conducted by Parks and colleagues (2015) investigated the prevalence of hazing among sororities and fraternities. They examined the distinct differences between men and women as well as differences between predominantly white colleges and historically black colleges. Their study found that men reported significantly more acts of hazing than women reported (Parks et al., 2015). The way in which this study analyzed the influence of race on engagement in hazing behaviors was through involvement in hazing at predominantly white colleges and historically black colleges. For both men and women, those students who were enrolled at predominantly white colleges reported higher engagement in hazing behaviors than students enrolled at historically black colleges (Parks et al., 2015). These results indicate that hazing behaviors occur more often with men and students enrolled at predominantly white colleges.

Based upon this prior literature (Parks et al., 2014; Svec, 2014), five hypotheses were developed for this study. *Hypothesis 1* predicted that when presented with real-life scenarios, a

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definition of hazing, and definitions of the types and demands of hazing, SMs will be able to correctly identify hazing incidents. Hypotheses two through four addressed demographic trends around identification of hazing scenarios. *Hypothesis 2* posited that female SMs will be able to identify hazing scenarios correctly more often than male SMs. *Hypothesis 3* predicted that SMs in the older age bracket (40-60+ years) will identify hazing correctly less often than SMs in the younger age brackets (18-39 years). *Hypothesis 4* predicted that a SM's race will influence identification of hazing scenarios. *Hypothesis 5* predicted that there would be differences identification of hazing scenarios between Active Duty SMs and Reserve Component SMs. Additionally, recommendations for commanders and human relations specialists are provided to begin this paradigm/cultural shift towards an awareness and identification of this problematic behavior within the military.

## **Methods**

Three studies (including a pilot study) were conducted comprising three separate data collections. The following section outlines the procedures for both the pilot data collection as well as finalized procedures for Studies 2 and 3.

### *Overall Study Procedures*

A hazing survey was created to investigate whether SMs can identify hazing behaviors. A total of nine hazing scenarios and three neutral scenarios were transformed from real-life incidents that depicted hazing and non-hazing behaviors; these incidents were collected from a variety of sources. Each scenario had 6 follow-up questions consisting of the following: why the participant considered the scenario hazing, the type of hazing (e.g., subtle, harassment, or violent), the type of hazing demand (e.g., cognitive, behavioral, or physical), intervening behaviors, how the SM would prevent hazing, and how often they have seen this hazing behavior

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at work. Each participant was presented a total of four randomized scenarios, including one neutral scenario from one of three forms (Form A, B, or C). Each of the forms consisted of different examples of hazing and the types of demands.

Data collection occurred at the DEOMI Computer Laboratory. Participants were randomized to receive one of three online SurveyMonkey links corresponding to the respective type of form to access the survey. Physical copies of the survey were provided to participants if the online link failed to work. Pilot testing comprised seven parts including: (1) a pre-test written definition of hazing, (2) the hazing definitions for each Service, (3) the definitions for the three types of hazing and three types of demands that can occur in hazing incidents, (4) scenario evaluation, (5) post-test written definition of hazing, (6) demographic questions, and (7) an open comments and concerns section.

It was discovered in Study 1 (the pilot study) that most participants were either skipping the post-test written definition of hazing or copying their exact pre-test written definition for the post-test written definition. Therefore, data collection for Studies 2 and 3 were modified to reflect the same activities as above except for writing a post-test definition of hazing. All study materials were approved by the DEOMI Institutional Review Board. All participants provided informed consent to participate.

All participants were SMs or federal civilian employees taking a human relations training course at DEOMI. SMs from across all four Services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps) were represented. There were no Coast Guardsmen in this study. The sample sizes for each of the studies are as follows: Study 1, which served as a pilot study, had 73 participants of which 67 were SMs; Study 2 had 50 participants of which 47 were SMs; and Study 3 had 86 participants of which 74 were SM. A total of 209 human relations specialists in a student status participated

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across all three studies; however due to incomplete surveys, 57 participants were removed. This brought the total number of participants to 152. Of the 152 participants, 97% were SMs and 3% were General Schedule, or Civilian, employees.

## **Statistical Analysis**

All analyses for the three studies were completed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22 (IBM, Chicago, IL). Frequencies were conducted to evaluate overall means on survey questions. Chi-square analyses were conducted to investigate all categorical data such as survey type (e.g., Form A, B, or C) and demographic data (e.g., sex, race, and age). Statistical significant was set at  $p < .05$ .

## **Results**

### **Study 1: Results**

Overall, the majority of SMs (60%) were able to correctly identify all scenarios as hazing or neutral. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Sex, age, nor race significantly influenced whether a participant identified a scenario as hazing. There were no significant differences between the sexes in correctly identifying the scenarios,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 72) = .11, p = .946$ . Though Hypothesis 2 was not supported, more men (67%) were able to correctly identify all scenarios than women (33%); however it is important to note that during this study more men participated than women.

There were also no differences in identification of hazing scenarios between the different age categories,  $\chi^2 (8, N = 71) = 7.01, p = .536$ . The most commonly identified age bracket was 30-39 years of age (67%). Of those SMs in this age bracket, the majority (57%) were able to correctly identify all four scenarios. The age brackets of 25-29, 40-49, and 50-59 also had a

majority of SMs identify all four scenarios correctly (7%, 56%, and 67%, respectively,  $p = .536$ ). Hypothesis 3 was also not supported.

There were no differences in identification of hazing scenarios between the different race categories,  $\chi^2 (8, N = 72) = 6.25, p = .620$ . Black/African American participants correctly identified all scenarios 57% of the time, White participants correctly identified all scenarios 54% of the time, and Asian participants correctly identified all scenarios 100% of the time.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

## **Study 2: Results**

A consistent percentage of SMs identified the scenarios as hazing as in Study 1. The majority of SMs (58%) who participated were able to correctly identify all scenarios as hazing or neutral. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Again, sex, age, nor race did not significantly influence whether participants correctly identified a scenario as hazing. There were no differences between men and women in identifying a scenario as hazing,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 49) = 4.55, p = .208$ . However, the majority of women (70%) SMs were able to correctly identify all four scenarios whereas the majority of men were unable to correctly identify all four scenarios. A little less than half (46%) of the men correctly identified all four scenarios while the majority of women (55%) identified one or more hazing scenarios incorrectly. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

The different age categories had no impact on participants correctly identifying hazing scenarios,  $\chi^2 (9, N = 49) = 11.26, p = .258$ . Most participants identified as either 30-39 years of age (43%) or 40-49 years of age (41%). Of the 30-39 year old participants, the majority (67%) were able to correctly identify all four scenarios. Of the 40-49 year old participants, a little over

half (55%) were able to correctly identify all four scenarios. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Race of participants did not impact whether participants correctly identified hazing scenarios,  $\chi^2 (15, N = 49) = 9.79, p = .833$ . The majority of participants identified as White or Black/African American. Of those who identified as White, the majority (64%) were able to correctly identify all four scenarios whereas the majority of Black or African American participants (57%) correctly identified three scenarios. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

### **Study 3: Results**

A slightly higher percentage of participants were able to correctly identify all four scenarios as either hazing or neutral (76%) as compared to participants in Studies 1 and 2. Hypothesis 1 was further supported.

Overall, demographics did not influence how participants identified hazing scenarios. There were no significant differences between males or females in correctly identifying hazing scenarios,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 86) = 1.40, p = .706$ . For both men and women, the majority of participants were able to correctly identify all four scenarios. Eight-four percent of women versus 73% of men correctly identified all four scenarios. Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

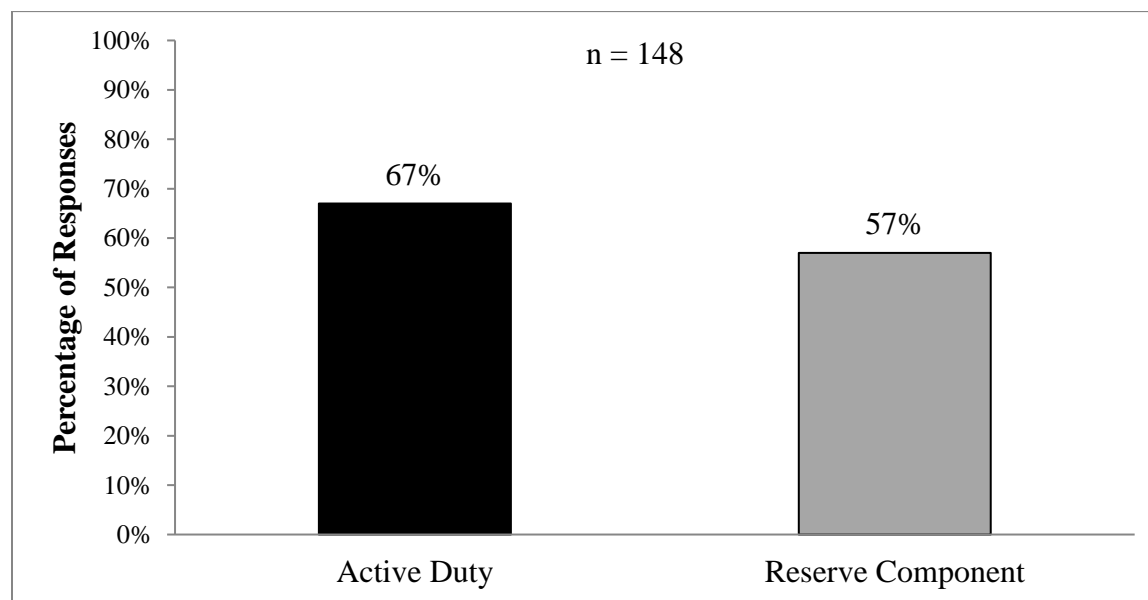
There were no significant differences in correctly identifying hazing scenarios across age categories,  $\chi^2 (12, N = 86) = 4.23, p = .979$ . The most commonly identified age group was 30-39 years of age, representing 58% of participants. Within that category, 74% of participants correctly identified all scenarios. Of the second largest group identified, 40-49 year old participants, the majority (70%) were able to correctly identify all four scenarios. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

There was also no significant difference between race categories in identifying hazing scenarios,  $\chi^2 (15, N = 85) = 24.17, p = .062$ . The majority of participants identified as either White (48%) or Black/African American (38%). Of those who identified as White, the majority (76%) were able to correctly identify all four scenarios. The majority of Black/African American (88%) participants were also able to correctly identify all four scenarios. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

## Identification of Hazing Scenarios among Active Duty versus Reserve Component Service Members

Across all three studies, there was a combination of Active Duty ( $n = 113$ ) and Reserve Component ( $n = 35$ ) SMs. Researchers were interested in whether there were significant differences between Active Duty and Reserve Component SMs correctly identifying the scenarios as hazing. Analyses revealed there were no differences between the two groups,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 148) = 1.20, p = .273$ . Active Duty SMs (67%) correctly identified all scenarios as hazing while Reserve Component SMs correctly identified all scenarios 57% of the time (see Figure 1). Hypothesis 1 was supported here, as the majority of both Active Duty and Reserve Component SMs were able to correctly identify all the scenarios. Hypothesis 5, however, was not supported.

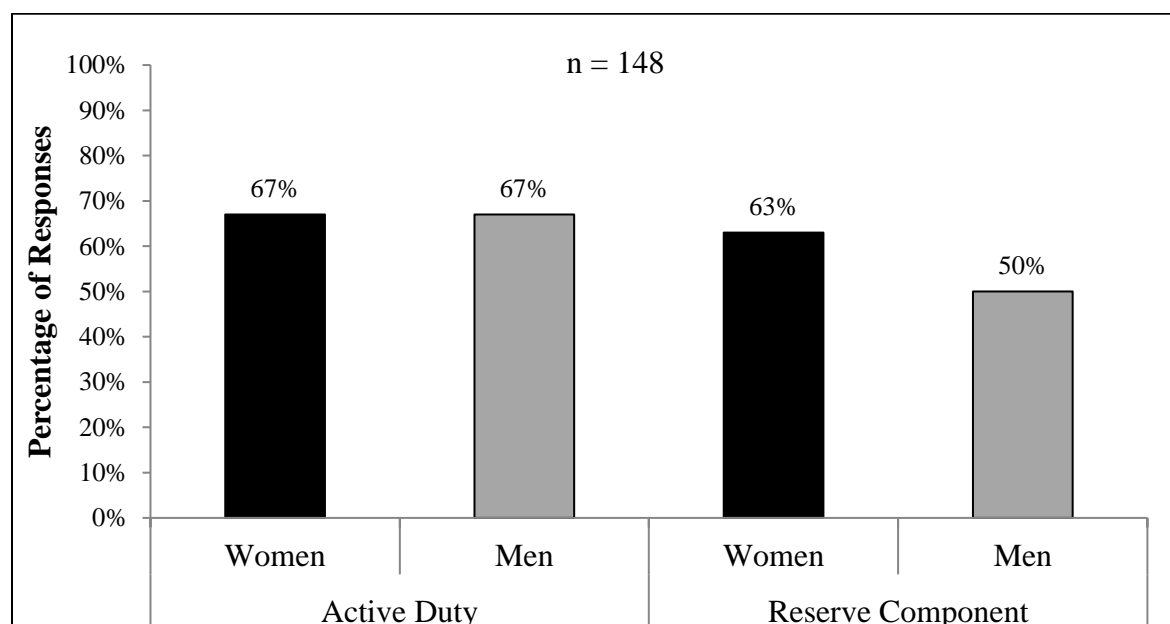
*Figure 1. Correct Identification of Hazing Scenarios by Active Duty versus Reserve Component Service Members*





The same three demographic variables, sex, race, and age, were also examined to determine whether there were statistical differences between the Active Duty and Reserve Component SMs. When examining differences between the two groups, differences begin to emerge. There were significantly more Active Duty men ( $n = 87$ ) than Active Duty women ( $n = 29$ ) as compared to the Reserve Component, which had significantly more women ( $n = 19$ ) than men ( $n = 16$ ),  $\chi^2 (1, N = 148) = 11.52, p < .001$ . For Active Duty SMs, the majority of both men (67%) and women (67%) were just as likely to correctly identify all scenarios as hazing,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 113) = .01, p = .940$ . In the Reserve Component, women were more likely to correctly identify all the scenarios (63%); however, men (50%) were almost equal in correctly and incorrectly identifying one or more scenarios as hazing (53%),  $\chi^2 (1, N = 35) = .61, p = .433$  (see Figure 2). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

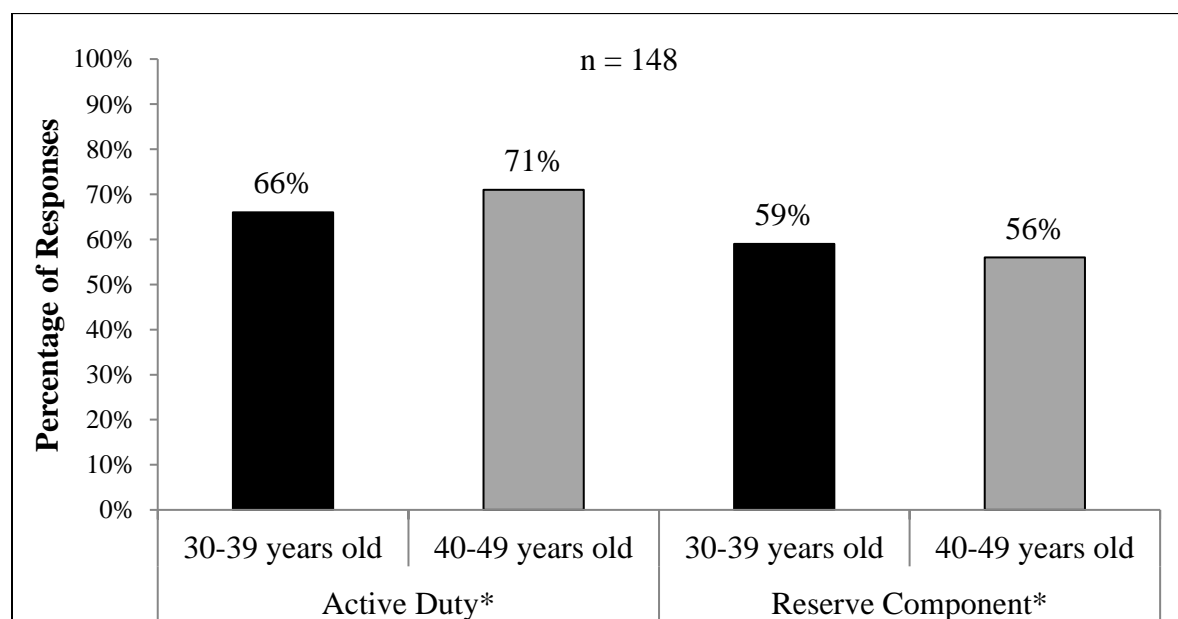
*Figure 2. Correct Identification of Hazing Scenarios by Sex for Active Duty versus Reserve Component Service Members*



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The age bracket participants identified was significantly different between the Active Duty and Reserve Component SMs,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 148) = 6.95, p < .01$ . Active Duty SMs had significantly more younger participants (73%) identified in the 30-39 years age range while the majority of Reserve Component SMs (51%) identified in the 40-49 age range. However, age did not influence correctly identifying scenarios as hazing between the groups,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 148) = 1.19, p = .273$  (see Figure 3). For both Active Duty 30-39 (66%) and 40-49 (71%) year olds as well as Reserve Component 30-39 (59%) and 40-49 (56%) year olds, the majority of SMs correctly identified all of the scenarios ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 113) = .27, p = .605$  for Active Duty and  $\chi^2 (1, N = 35) = .04, p = .845$  for Reserve Component, respectively; see Figure 3). Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

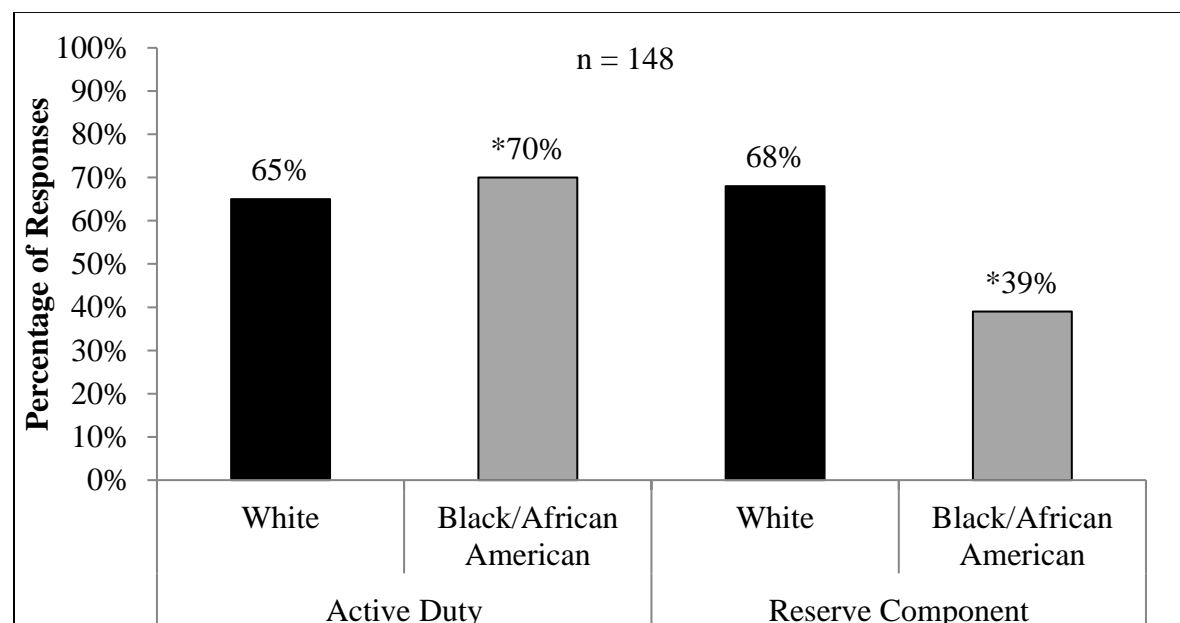
*Figure 3. Correct Identification of Hazing Scenarios by Age for Active Duty versus Reserve Component Service Members*



Note: \* Indicates significant difference in age between Active Duty and Reserve Component Service Members

Race was not significantly different between Active Duty and Reserve Component SMs,  $\chi^2(1, N = 148) = 1.03, p = .310$ . There was a statistical trend for Active Duty Black/African American SMs (70%) to identify all scenarios correctly more than Reserve Component Black/African American SMs (39%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 66) = 4.43, p < .05$ . For Active Duty SMs, the majority of both Black/African American and White SMs (70% vs. 65%, respectively) identified all the scenarios correctly,  $\chi^2(1, N = 113) = .30, p = .587$ . For the Reserve Component, only White SMs (68%) correctly identified all scenarios (see Figure 4). Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

*Figure 4. Correct Identification of Hazing Scenarios by Race for Active Duty versus Reserve Component Service Members*



Note: \* Indicates significant difference in identifying scenarios correctly between Active Duty African American and Reserve Component African American Service Members

## Discussion

The purpose of this report was to discuss the findings of a hazing study designed to determine if SMs can identify hazing from transformed real-life scenarios. The findings indicate that SMs are able to identify hazing behaviors, with a little over half of participants correctly identifying all scenarios, thus supporting Hypothesis 1. It also seems that, overall, demographic variables do not influence SMs' identification of hazing behaviors when each data collection group was analyzed separately. Therefore, Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were not supported.

However, when examining differences between the Active Duty and Reserve Component SMs, statistically significant demographic differences begin to emerge. Active Duty SMs were significantly younger than Reserve Component SMs. There were significantly more men in the Active Duty Component and significantly more women in the Reserve Component. However, when it came to hypothesis testing, even between the Active Duty and Reserve Component, demographic variables were not statistically significant. Sex, age, and race did not influence the correct identification of hazing scenarios. The only difference seen at a statistical level was between Black/African American Active Duty SMs and Reserve Component SMs. This difference indicates that Black/African American Active Duty SMs are better at identifying when hazing is occurring in a real-life scenario.

Taken together with the results from Svec (2014), SMs are able to grasp the concept of hazing activities when queried. Simple frequencies of overall data revealed that 65% of SMs were able to correctly identify all scenarios as either hazing or neutral while 35% of SMs were still unable to identify all of the scenarios correctly. While the majority of SMs from this sample, as well as Svec's (2014) sample, are able to identify all scenarios correctly, there is still one-third of SMs who are unable to identify scenarios as hazing when provided definitions of hazing and a

study guide. This provides evidential support that there is a gap in knowledge and should be further addressed.

### **Hazing Recommendations for Commanders and Human Relations Specialists**

The recommendations listed in Table 2 are an adaptation from Keller et al.'s (2015) RAND Report for hazing prevention. These recommendations are to assist commanders and human relations specialists in the next steps to addressing hazing in the Field, Fleet, and Wing. This study is in line with RAND's recommendations for how hazing can be prevented.

Special attention should be paid to supporting the attitudes and climate that enforces hazing as a crime and not a tradition. According to the GAO (2016) report, the prevention of hazing is the responsibility of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; however, the DoD has not maintained oversight on monitoring or implementation of each Service's hazing policy. In addition, the GAO report outlines that each Service's policy establish requirements for enforcement of hazing prevention, but no Service has implementation or accountability of the enforcement for prevention. As can be seen in the GAO report, many steps can be taken to prevent hazing within the Armed Forces, but without the climate and attitude to support the idea that hazing is unproductive to the mission, preventive measures will likely fail. By starting at the top of the hierarchy and having leaders address hazing behaviors, especially those behaviors disguised as tradition, then other SMs will follow suit.

Another way to address hazing prevention is implementing a change in culture. This also means there has to be enforced punishment to those who do engage in hazing behaviors. Even when a hazing allegation has been substantiated and evidential support has been found, punishment may not be handed out to the offender because they are found not guilty at non-judicial punishment or court martial (GAO, 2016). Changing the culture of the military cannot be

accomplished by talk alone; everyone has to be an active participant dedicated to modeling non-hazing behaviors. Enforcing policies and punishments for SMs who engage in and potentially witness hazing behaviors, especially when evidential support has been found, will send the message that the military is serious about ending hazing within their ranks and that it will no longer be tolerated.

Additional special consideration should go towards training development and delivery. By simply incorporating active learning techniques such as role-playing, personal experience discussions, video displays, and feedback, SMs may be more engaged in the training offered and transfer what they have learned into their work environment. Based off of Lindeman's (1926) key assumptions of adult learners, which has become the foundation of adult learning and received a large amount of empirical support, it is important to incorporate elements that draw on personal experiences, allowing SMs to be self-directed in their learning and to satisfy their needs and interests. By incorporating active learning techniques, SMs may digest the knowledge and also be more interested in the topic. By appealing to their adult learning needs, there are higher probabilities that they will take their new knowledge and apply it to their work environment. This application, in return, could result in reported hazing incidents being taken more seriously and a more active role in preventing hazing incidents from occurring.

*Table 2. Recommendations for Commanders and Human Relations Specialists*

<i>Organizational Level Recommendations</i>	<i>Individual Level Recommendations</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a clear policy on hazing behaviors and consequences for engaging in them</li> <li>• Hold leaders accountable for preventing hazing and for swiftly punishing hazing</li> <li>• Have options for reporting anonymously and outside the Chain of Command</li> <li>• Change the attitude of “It’s tradition” to “It’s an offense punishable under the UCMJ”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of both short- and long-term consequences</li> <li>• Teach leaders how to identify and address hazing</li> <li>• Incorporate active learning techniques such as role play, videos, and feedback</li> <li>• Teach Service Members that hazing behaviors are an offense punishable under Articles 80, 81, 93, 124, 128, 133, and 134</li> </ul>

Note: Modified from Keller et al. (2015)

Something important to note is the difference in Black/African American SMs’ identification between Active Duty and Reserve Component SMs. As there are differences in the ability to identify hazing, this warrants attention. It may be that training and awareness of hazing needs a more prominent appearance for the Reserve Component. With this initial evidence, it seems the Reserve Component may need more trainings on hazing and hazing behaviors.

### **Limitations**

A major limitation to this research study and applying the results to the Field, Fleet, and Wing is the diversity of military cultures and attitudes towards hazing. Hazing behaviors are viewed as counterproductive, dangerous, or risky. Many SMs may not even believe hazing occurs as they see these behaviors as traditions or rites of passage. The mentality of “I went through this and survived so nothing is wrong with it” is pervasive in the military. Though these behaviors were accepted in the past, it does not make them acceptable today. Changing the culture and mentality of the military will be a large hurdle and it will take time for this shift to occur.

DISCLAIMER: The findings in this report are not to be construed as an official DEOMI, U.S. military services, or Department of Defense position, unless designated by other authorized documents.

Much of the research suggests that these hazing behaviors are dangerous and can have life-long repercussions. Without the leaders' support of preventing hazing behaviors, modeling non-hazing behaviors, and without SMs speaking up and being active bystanders when they witness or experience hazing behaviors, research efforts, trainings, handbooks, policies, and procedures for preventing hazing behaviors will be useless.

Several limitations further exist which may explain why several of the sub-hypotheses related to demographics were not supported. The sample was a convenience sample of human relations specialists in a student status. They have received hazing training throughout their careers, and as indicated by these data, some participants fell into the 40-49 year age group. It is quite possible that being in this age group, and for that matter, the 30-39 year age bracket, are not the targeted ages where current research efforts will have the most impact in regards to hazing behaviors. Therefore, through those SMs' years of standardized training, they should have a good interpretation of what are considered hazing behaviors. This creates little diversity in answers and potentially may explain the non-significant findings.

Fidelity of the scenarios is another limitation this study experienced. Although all scenarios were created from real-life events, transforming them into scenarios that would fit into a survey does put limitations on the fidelity. Therefore, elements of real-life hazing behaviors may be present in each scenario, but they may not reflect exact scenarios that occur in a military setting.

Another limitation is that these data were collected with self-report measures. Self-report measures are susceptible to subjective bias. Unfortunately, when investigating the perceptions of participants, there is no other way to collect these data other than self-report measures.



A final limitation to this study is experimenter bias. With this study, there was no measurement as to whether the participants completed it based on their beliefs or what they felt they were expected to answer. As human relations specialists, participants had a basic knowledge of hazing as they have received prior training on hazing.

### **Future Research**

Future research should investigate whether SMs who are not trained in human relations issues are able to identify hazing behaviors in different scenarios. Being that the participants for this study were trained in recognizing equal opportunity issues to support a healthy command climate, they are more likely to have pre-existing knowledge on the topic of hazing even though hazing is not yet as of this writing considered an equal opportunity issue but can spur equal opportunity issues. Their pre-existing knowledge could have primed the way they answered the survey questions. Therefore, recruiting participants from the military's general population, particularly lower ranks (e.g., E1-E4) may elicit a more accurate analysis of a SM's knowledge of hazing. Data collected from this population could provide additional recommendations for products such as training, resources, frequently asked questions fact sheets, posters, and other field-awareness products.

In addition, research questions should identify the reasons why SMs consider a scenario to be hazing, and, if applicable, why they still may think a behavior is hazing behavior. For example, if a SM indicates they do not believe a scenario is hazing, they should have the opportunity to explain why. With an understanding of SMs' rationale for their beliefs, further steps can be taken such as re-educating them that those behaviors are dangerous, providing posters or facts sheets about the short- and long-term consequences of hazing, providing the

specific Articles from the UCMJ that describe hazing as a crime, and even providing SMs with civilian hazing incident reports or laws under which hazing is a crime.

### **Summary**

Overall, two-thirds of SMs from these studies were able to identify hazing behaviors transformed from real-life scenarios. This is evidence that the majority of SMs understand hazing and recognize when hazing behaviors are occurring. In addition, demographic variables (e.g., sex, age, or race) were not an influential variable in this study on SMs identifying hazing scenarios. These results provide suggestions for hazing prevention efforts and future research.

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